

Zhang et al.

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In the Specification

Please replace paragraph 31 with the following paragraphs:

Once the customer's status is determined as qualified 118, 126, then the user is notified of receipt of the recurrent use request at 128. Next, an activation key or electronic enabler is generated at 130. Alternatively, if desired, an automated billing invoice can be generated with the electronic enabler and sent to the centralized facility for further processing. After generation 130, the activation key is then downloaded 132 from the centralized facility to memory in the selected device 112, 116. The activation key is preferably an alphanumeric software key or code that is programmed to enable a specific software option on a particular device to prevent the possibility of unauthorized usage. A date/time stamp is embedded within the key causing the software to grant indefinite access to and use of the option. In an alternative embodiment, after generation of the activation key 130, an agreement or license granting access to and use of the device may be generated and sent to the customer that automatically terminates upon a change in a customer's status to unqualified.

After download 132, the activation key is stored in memory of the device 134 and the software option is enabled granting the customer indefinite access to and use of the option requested. Preferably, the system automatically verifies storage and the accessibility of the option and transmits an electronic verification message 136 from the centralized facility to the customer and/or the remote customer station. After message verification, the customer status is monitored 138. Next, a determination is made of whether customer status remains qualified or changes to unqualified 140. If the customer status is qualified 142, the system continues to monitor the customer status at 138. If the status changes to an unqualified customer status 140, 144, the customer facility transmits a disabling key to deactivate the option 146. The user is then notified of the deactivation 148, and prompted to contact the centralized facility at 122, at which point the algorithm ends 150.